Smuggling of Antiques and Artifacts

1598. DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have examined the loopholes of the existing laws to prevent the smuggling of the antiques and artifacts in view of the facts emerging from the recent events of auction of Indian antiquities by renowned auctioneers abroad;

(b) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor;

(c) the number of cases reported and worked out in 1996 together with the estimated value of antiques;

(d) whether the Government have also taken up the matter of theft and sale of Indian artifacts with the countries involved in the sale of these goods; and

(e) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The existing arrangement for the registration of antiques and the mechanism for coordinations between the concerned agencies have been reviewed for stepping up vigilance to prevent smuggling of antiquities.

(c) The matter is still under investigation.

(d) and (e) The Indian High Commission at London have been requested to look into the alleged smuggling of antiquities and their auction by Sothebys in London in early 1997.

Public Interest Petitions

1599. SHRI SHATRUGHAN PRASAD SINGH: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state :

(a) the details of Public Interest Petitions in Supreme Court and High Courts during the last three years and the number of petitions out of these disposed of, State-wise;

(b) whether the development work has been affected by Public Interest Petitions;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the steps taken by the Government for speedy disposal of these petitions?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP): (a) to (d) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

[Translation]

Concession to the Exporters

1600. SHRI MAHENDRA SINGH BHATI : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Minister propose to extend some additional concessions to the exporters to boost the export to the Latin American countries;

(b) if so, whether any committees have been constituted to furnish vital information to the exporters aiming at the Latin American markets and to provide additional concessions to them; and

(c) if so, the time by which these committees are likely to submit their reports in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Two Committees to recommend (1) additional incentives and (ii) to recommend promotional measures for increasing our exports to the Latin American region have been constituted.

(c) The Committees have submitted their reports.

[English]

Praga Tools Limited

1601. SHRI AYYANNA PATRUDU : Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether Praga Tools Limited, Hyderabad is on the verge of closure;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Praga Tools Ltd. was unable to meet the orders placed by Germany, U.S.A., U.K. etc;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the steps taken by the Government for the revival of the company?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) and (d) The Company had orders from U.K. & Germany which could not be met in 1996-1997 due to financial problems.

(e) In principle approval has been given to Praga Tools Ltd. to convert it into a Joint Venture company.

Stock Investment Scheme

1602. SHRI MANGAL RAM PREMI : Will the Minister